CONSTANT REVOLUTION: THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA'S REACTIONARY APPROACH TO POLITICAL LEGITIMIZATION

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ABSTRACT

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Title: Constant Revolution: The Communist Party of China's Reactionary Approach to Political Legitimization

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This thesis traces the legitimization question that has plagued the Communist Party of China (CCP) since inception. Drawing inspiration from Weber's three types of legitimacy, the narrative established by this paper describes the establishment of the CCP's founding ideology and policies under Mao in the vein of charismatic-ideological legitimization and its role in birthing the economic-performance legitimization dogma that dominated the several decades preceding the Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping-led administrations. This thesis then argues that social issues, byproducts of the economic-performance legitimization system, incubated the CCP's current moral-ideological legitimization strategy. By following the legitimization narrative, this thesis offers an explanation for the motivations underlying the policies put forward by the Xi Jinping administration.

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Introduction

Under every step taken by the Communist Party of China ("CCP") lurks a potential political legitimacy landmine. The fall of the Soviet Union aggravated questions regarding the sustainability of nondemocratic political systems. Western scholarship has long debated the longevity of the CCP, assuming that any government based on nondemocratic values is inherently illegitimate. In the wake of the 1989 Tiananmen tragedy, Western academics began counting down the days until the CCP's imminent collapse, citing authoritarianism as the antithesis of long-term political legitimacy. However, not all Western scholars study China to predict the precise time of government apocalypse. Holbig and Gilley, Western co-authors on many oft-cited legitimacy studies, approach with a more sympathetic view, arguing that China's government legitimacy, under any government structure, is subject to "serious legitimacy fissures if only because of its size and complexity", preferring to view legitimization pains as a historical motif (Holbig & Gilley, 2010, p. 399).

While China watchers generated a steady stream of thought leadership on Chinese legitimization dating back to the establishment of the CCP, recent CCP administrations tacitly allowed the proliferation of academic research within both CCP schools and non-state-controlled universities on the subject of political legitimacy, considered a subversive topic area in years past (Holbig & Gilley, 2010; Zhang, 2013; Buckley, 2013). At the Party and the World Dialogue 2015, Wang Qishan, a member of the Politburo Standing Committee, directly referenced the source of CCP legitimacy (Ruan, 2015). The lack of absolute censorship over the topic of legitimacy reveals the current CCP administration's self-perspective. As with the generations of leadership that followed Mao, the current regime pragmatically treats political legitimacy as a living, changeable quality that requires strategic nurture. The CCP, no longer led by an

ideological figurehead and unable to revert to the level of authoritarianism seen during the Cultural Revolution, is augmenting its efforts to reinvigorate and redefine its political legitimacy. The CCP's surprising willingness to address the legitimacy problem within the semi-public sphere of academia signals a waxing commitment towards tackling the elephant in the room.

A Brief Note on Political Legitimacy

Political legitimacy by itself is a term defined vaguely and often tinged with democratic bias. Few modern discussions of political legitimacy can do without a brief introduction to the theories of Max Weber. Weber, a German sociologist, became a familiar name in the study of political phenomena following the publication of his essay, *The Three Types of Legitimate Rule*, in 1922. He distills political legitimacy into three Platonic types: legal-rational, traditional, and charismatic (Weber & Whimster, 2004, pp.133-138).

Weber's perspective on his three types of legitimacy is similar to that of color theory. The three pure forms act like the three primary colors and can be mixed in varying capacities to express a rainbow of shades. Legal-rational legitimacy is "based upon belief in the authority of rules which have been established by the formally correct procedures"; individual authority plays a minimal role in this form for individual leaders are accepted so long as authoritative laws are followed (Beetham, 1991, p. 36). In contrast, traditional and charismatic legitimacy "are forms of personal authority", as traditional legitimacy finds its basis in traditional norms and charismatic legitimacy hinges upon the extraordinary characteristics of individual leaders (Beetham, 1991, p. 36).

Ever since Weber propagated his legitimacy types, his work been critiqued and modified to no end. David Beetham finds fault in the three types because they are both antecedents and descendants of each other (Beetham, 1991, p. 39). Various riffs on the Weberian forms have

emerged, particularly in reference to authoritarian governments. Allen Buchanan distinguishes between political legitimacy, political authority, and authoritativeness, imposing an additional criterion of moral justification to satisfy legitimacy (Buchanan, 2002, p. 689). A more practical approach to political legitimacy can be found in Bruce Gilley's cross-national hypothesis-testing on significant variables influencing citizen perception of legitimacy. Gilley defines legitimacy on the basis that "a state is more legitimate the more that it is treated by its citizens as rightfully holding and exercising political power", building a case of perception-based legitimacy evaluation (Gilley, 2006, p. 48). Following a thorough review of over 65 academic studies, Gilley identifies welfare gains (income, life satisfaction, social equality, national pride, political engagement) and political justice (control of corruption, rule of law, effective bureaucracy) as key sources of political legitimacy (Gilley, 2006, pp. 49-52). Gilley's regression model supports the identified variables and he attributes high levels of legitimacy to "good performance" (namely, high income levels) (Gilley, 2006, p. 60).

Purpose of Thesis

The positive assessment of performance legitimization produced by Gilley's work returns the discussion of political legitimacy to the CCP. Western observers tend to categorize the CCP's strategy as that of economic performance legitimacy. David Shambaugh, one of the top three most-cited Western academics on the topic of Chinese political legitimacy, warned of "the coming Chinese crackup" and lambasting Xi Jinping in a *Wall Street Journal* opinion-editorial in March 2016, prompting surprise from long-time readers given Shambaugh's general reputation as a cautious, moderate China scholar (Wade, 2015). As warning signs of economic and social stability come knocking, a renewed wave of naysayers have emerged, questioning the longevity of the CCP.

Xi Jinping, the leader of the CCP since 2012, is a quandary China watchers love to unpick. Early coverage of Xi Jinping in 2012 invoked folksy human interest language, describing Xi Jinping's "affable" personality (Branigan, 2012). Over time, Western news sources began to betray a distinct unease, as Xi Jinping's leaked directives[1] take aim at Western ideals (Buckley, 2013). Now, images of Mao and Xi are paired, as journalists draw parallels between Mao's Cultural Revolution and Xi Jinping's "Chinese Dream" (Browne, 2013). One unflattering *Wall Street Journal* article was published just days after reports revealed that authorities were actively trying to stem Xi Jinping's growing personality cult by blocking Xi's hometown nickname from publication in the media (Wong, 2016). Xi Jinping's reformist orientation, coupled with his Maoist tendencies, prompted the Brooking Institution to ask, "What does China really want?" (Bader, 2016).

This thesis seeks to explain the major initiatives introduced under Xi Jinping as a continuation of, rather than a break from, the CCP's ongoing endeavor to establish political legitimacy. This thesis argues that the ideological legitimization strategy of Mao created social problems that required the development of economic-performance legitimization under the CCP administrations that followed his death. Accordingly, Xi Jinping's administration has inherited its own set of social problems created by the economic-performance legitimization strategy of post-Mao leadership, which it seeks to resolve by adopting a moral-ideological legitimization strategy.

Discussion Roadmap

The first chapter of this thesis will cover the historical background of the CCP, particularly the basis of core CCP ideology and Mao's cult of personality. In the second chapter,

[1] Known as Document No. 9

a broad overview of the economic-performance legitimization from the time of market reform to the early 2000s. The chapter will discuss the need for performance legitimization in the immediate post-Mao era as well as the multitude of social problems that emerged in the implementation of the strategy. The third and final chapter discusses the near-term approach the Xi Jinping administration has taken to address the CCP's top social priorities and the long-term crusade the CCP has sanctioned to claim a uniquely Chinese legacy. A case study on the Three Gorges Dam will illustrate the contrast between the CCP's legitimization strategies regarding the same project. Finally, this thesis will summarize the findings of all three chapters to arrive at a unified theory for explaining CCP legitimization activity.

Critically, this thesis does not masquerade as a comprehensive approach to the question of Chinese political legitimacy. Political affairs cannot be explained by one theory, nor can the true story of over half a century of human drama and political intrigue be covered in the span of a double-digit number of pages. Ideally, this thesis will present a view on CCP political activity that does not assume that democracy is the self-actualized form of government.

Methodology

Official Framing

This thesis utilizes a means-based approach towards interpreting political legitimization strategy. Rather than evaluating the success or failure of the current CCP in achieving political goals, this thesis studies the "official framing" espoused by the central government. The ends of legitimization strategies are hard to gauge until long after strategy implementation. Not only that, the intended strategy may not achieve its desired effect. For example, "[differentiating] whether one who is not politically active rejects the legitimacy of the political authority [is difficult]. [After all, it] is in time of crisis, such as a revolution or an invasion, that the rejection of an authority's legitimacy manifests itself…for example, [the] Iraqi army during the Second Gulf War, by and large, did not fight to save the dictator they previously seemed to have supported" (Greif & Tadelis, 2010, p.240). While the periods of CCP history defined by charismatic-ideological and economic-performance legitimacy will involve a discussion of policy achievement, no such attempt will be found in Chapter 3. Instead, the ongoing Xi Jinping administration's strategy will be exploratory, and the CCP's strategy will be discerned by study of the rhetoric found in speeches, official mouthpieces, and government documents as well as academic research from both English and Chinese-language sources.

As Bondes and Heep describe, the official framing legitimacy approach "[contends] that the ruling elites in authoritarian regimes propagate official frames in a continuous effort to reproduce the belief of the populace in the elites' leadership qualities and their determination to serve the common interest" (Bondes & Heep, 2013, p.317). Given the CCP's well-documented intervention and censorship practices within Chinese media, the official framing approach is

highly suitable for critical analysis of the CCP's identified legitimization threats and strategic approach (Yao et al, 2011; Wang, 2013).

While the academic sources within this thesis are biased towards Western views, theoretical bias may be not as severe as it may seem. Chinese literature on political legitimacy is often inspired by Western thinkers (Zhang, 2013, p.9). In fact, an analysis of Chinese articles dated from 2008 to 2012 revealed a recent academic irony. While Western scholars increasingly interpret CCP legitimacy through the lens of the past, Chinese scholars study Western legitimacy theories, with roughly 40% of articles citing Weber, Habermas, Huntington and Lipset (Zeng, 2014).

Morality

Another critical distinction for this thesis is delineating the divergence between moral-ideological legitimization and morality. While this thesis argues that the Xi administration is pursuing a moral-ideological legitimization strategy, the argument is morally agnostic. The central argument concerns domestic official framing and only touches upon implementation success or failure when it influences future legitimization strategy in some way.

Central & Local Government Distinction

The Chinese government is far from monolithic, with provincial governments running budgets exceeding that of some countries and numerous ministries overseeing a broad array of functions. The portion of the Chinese government addressed is the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China ("Central Committee"), especially the Central Politburo of the Communist Party of China ("Politburo") and the Standing Committee of the Central Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China ("Politburo Standing Committee"). These comprise the highest tiers of central government, with the Politburo Standing Committee acting as the *de facto*

decision-making body of the party. The central government sets the legitimization strategy of the CCP at a national level while local governments are more detached from the legitimization question; thus, the public image goals of the central government are the chief focus of this thesis.

Additionally, the central government and its subsidiary local governments often act independently. While top-level corruption undoubtedly exists, particularly in light of the infamous Bo Xilai affair, local government corruption is undoubtedly more prevalent. In imperial China, a proverb arose detailing the mismatch between central government policies and local government enforcement (天高皇帝远[2]). Accordingly, measures of public political support distinguish between diffuse (national government) support and specific (local government) support. A 1997 study hypothesizes that citizens dissatisfied with local governance exhibit a differential between their mean diffuse support and specific support metrics because "[they believe] they might enjoy the support of higher levels of government" (Saich, 2007, p.23). The differential is often significant. Survey results conducted in both rural and urban China in 2007 found 86.1% of respondents reported they were "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied" with the central government (Saich, 2007, p.4). The respondents' satisfaction with local governments were noticeably lower. The lowest level of government included in the survey was the "township government"; only 43.6% of respondents were "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied" (Saich, 2007, p.4). In Saich's exploration of citizen perception, he considers the central government distinct from the provincial, county, and township governments (Saich, 2007). Further, the differential between diffuse and specific support is particularly prominent in less-developed regions, whereas "coastal and metropolitan areas" tend to hold more critical attitudes towards the

[2] Shan gao, Huangdi yuan – literally translates to "The mountains are high and the emperor is far away". This proverb is used to describe that even when the central government sets policies, without close supervision, local governments are the emperors of their own local domains.

central government (Lewis-Beck, et al., 2013, p.7). The central government's legitimization strategy may or may not have the intended effect of benefiting local government legitimacy.

Syntax

For consistency, Chinese names and geographic features will be referred to using Wade Giles pinyin format. This format is the mode of expression preferred by the CCP and used in official communications. For example, "Kuomintang" will be referred to as "Guomindang" and "Mao Tse-tung" will be referred to as "Mao Zedong".

Chapter 1 Charismatic-Ideological Legitimization

The policies of Mao Zedong, particularly during the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, chartered the course of the CCP. Chapter 1 establishes a foundation for understanding the founding principles of the CCP and the reasons why economic-performance legitimacy became the norm in the period following Mao's death.

Mao Zedong: An Early Portrait

The story of the CCP begins with the demise of the Qing dynasty. Though the Manchu-led Qing dynasty had successfully unified China, the early 20th century saw uprisings born of increasing Han Chinese nationalism and disgust for the political impotence and glaring corruption. The Nationalist Republic of China[3] (or Guomindang) filled the power vacuum formed by the abdication of the last Chinese emperor in February 1912 but struggled to maintain control over a society unused to Republican rule. Though the Guomindang formally led the nation, the decades following its formation were "known as the 'Warlord Era'", due to widespread factionalism (Horner & Brown, 2011). The roots of Communism in China were formally established in 1921, developed in opposition to the Guominding. Prior to the victory of the CCP in 1949, China was embroiled in a civil war between the Communists and the Guomindang, which was punctuated by the Second Sino-Japanese War. It was during this period of shifting alliances and lengthy battles that the ideological basis of the CCP gestated.

Mao Zedong[4], the eventual Chairman of the CCP, and Jiang Jieshi[5], the President of the Nationalist Republic of China, both wrote extensively during wartime to outline their political

[3] Frequently referred to by Western sources as "Kuomintang"
[4] Alternative name: Mao Tsetung

views and ideological platform. Charles Stevens, writing for the *Asian Survey* in 1964, conducted a comparative content analysis of selected propaganda pieces by Mao Zedong with Jiang Jieshi's *China's Destiny* from the same wartime period. The selection of Mao's writings comprised of essays most well-known and familiar to his Chinese contemporaries. The comparative analysis involved comparable text length. The overall purpose of the study was to create a common mechanism by which to evaluate the extent to which both writers valued common issues. He isolated key ideological issues present in both selections and developed a point system based on the frequency of relevant jargon. The terms researched included culture, politics, economics, international relations and history and were selected for both literal and connotative meaning. Each occurrence of a relevant term was scored one unit with additional unit weighting assigned when the entire passage focused on the term.

The results of the 1964 study are eye-opening for they illustrate not only each leader's political priorities but also insight into the greater popular appeal of Maoist thought. Given that nationalism played a lead role in the political rhetoric of the time, the greater appearance of jargon concerning nationalism above all other ideological term groups is hardly surprising. For the category of "nationalism", Mao scores 990 units to Jiang's 2552 units, indicating a strong preference on Jiang's part for promoting his political party on those grounds (Stevens, 1964, p. 895). Critically, the next most frequent ideological categories were political progressivism and economics, both of which are aligned to reform and policy-making. In the category of political progressivism, Mao scores 333 units to Jiang's 164 units (Stevens, 1964, p. 895). For usage of words regarding economics, particularly economic reform, Mao scores 213 units to Jiang's 64 units (Stevens, 1964, p. 895). Stevens postulates that Mao's political success came as a result of

[5] Frequently referred to in the West as "Chiang Kai-shek"

deploying relatively actionable platform points (political progressivism and economics) alongside a requisite emphasis on nationalism.

Secondary results of the analysis further illuminate Mao's psyche. In contrast with his ideological foil, Mao demonstrated a lower reliance on appeals to "Chinese uniqueness" or anti-Japanese sentiment within his discussions of nationalism (Stevens, 1964, p. 899). Instead, Mao expounded the distinct benefits only the CCP could claim, like systemic reform. Mao's writings also exhibit his talent for attack propaganda. Mao scores 137 units for the term "Jiang Jieshi" and 612 units for "Kuomingtang", while Jiang Jieshi never mentions Mao in his writing and mentions "Communism" relatively rarely (60 units) (Stevens, 1964, p. 894). Furthermore, Mao put himself on the defensive in his writings while Jiang generally paid no heed to criticism.

Overall, reading Mao's wartime writings, particularly when contrasted with those of Jiang Jieshi, reveals two of his strategic trademarks. First, Mao appealed to common people more effectively than Jiang Jieshi by discussing reform-oriented ideology in his essays, more concretely claiming a devotion to change. Jiang Jieshi damaged his credibility before the disenchanted citizens he was courting by appealing to lofty ideals, creating the impression of elitism and aloofness. Second, Mao demonstrated his willingness to and talent for employing propaganda for mass appeal. Whether or not Mao's high degree of responsiveness in both attacking and defending himself from his political opponents stemmed from ideology-driven passion or from personal insufficiency, his strategy converted more ideological disciples than Jiang Jieshi was able to.

Further early indications of Mao's political approach are found in his study preferences. During his formative years, Mao was personally "interested mainly in speculative subjects, such as world and national politics" and came to feel that "those who are most divorced from reality

are the ones in the departments of arts, be they students of history, philosophy, or economics" (Dittmer, 1974, p.39). Mao strongly believed that "direct experience [was] a better teacher than emulative book learnings" and that "ideology and politics are the leader and the soul" (Dittmer, 1974, p.36). Given his love of the human spirit and pursuit of speculative subjects, Mao avoided talk of specifics for he believed specifics undermined ideological purity. He preferred to "talk only of large matters – the nature of man, of human society, the world, and the universe" (Dittmer, 1974, p.37). Mao may have led a movement based on bookish Communist roots but he was perceived less so as a philosopher than as a selfless soldier whose leadership shone during the Long March. First and foremost, Mao gained leadership of the Communist movement through military achievements and a flair for arousing the urgency and passion within his followers.

The final battle that toppled the Guomintang was waged over the city of Chengdu, the last outpost of the Nationalist Party. The defeat of the Guomintang cast the last bloody vote for the CCP as Jiang Jieshi fled to Taiwan, permanently. For the CCP, the battle for China was over but the battle for political legitimacy had only just begun.

The Legitimization Strategy of the Nascent CCP

Upon the formal creation of the People's Republic of China on October 1st, 1949, the CCP entered into a period of irresolute ideology. The newly anointed party leaders comprised of revolutionary heroes more accustomed to tactical maneuvers than policy-making. The CCP squabbled over how to implement Communism, namely if the Soviet model suited the needs of China. Ultimately, Communist reformers settled on an implementation model distinct from the

Soviet system while appropriating legitimacy from its more established ally (V.Racknitz, 2014, p.498). As a Chinese proverb goes: "狐假虎威"[6].

Borrowing from Soviet Communist legacy and establishing its economic policies was insufficient for the long-term entrenchment of Chinese Communism, especially given that the Soviet Union, a recently development of 1922, did not yet have the reputation to command Weberian traditional legitimacy. The existential imperative for the CCP was spreading Communist ideas to the Chinese populace and enforcing ideological adherence. Pursuing ideological legitimization was, perhaps, the only viable legitimization strategy accessible to the fledgling CCP. Lowell Dittmer of the University of Chicago hypothesizes that the CCP's legitimization strategy was made in response to the lack of mass acceptance of "rational-legal formalism as a legitimation for political domination" (Dittmer, 1974, p.48). Given the nature of charisma, it seems likely that the early CCP did not anticipate the eventual cult of personality that would someday develop around Mao Zedong. While the charismatic nature of Mao's ideological legitimization strategy became a cornerstone of the Mao-led CCP, the initial legitimization strategy was a reaction to previous governance.

Under Mao's firm control, the CCP's charismatic-ideological legitimization strategy sought to replace traditional cultural norms and maintain the revolutionary spirit. Traditional cultural norms favored imperialism, and thus posed a legitimacy threat to the CCP. The imperial dynasties, under Weber's three types, were perceived by the populace as legitimate on a combination of legal-rational and traditional legitimacy. Thus, Mao sought to attack the cultural norms by reeducating the public to instill an affinity with the Soviet Communist legacy rather than with an imperial one. Confucianism, considered a cornerstone of imperial rule and

[6] This proverb is based on a story of a fox attributing the source of other animals' fear to herself by walking in front of a tiger, thus convincing the tiger she holds great influence. This story is used in reference to weaker individuals borrowing influence from stronger individuals to achieve goals they could not obtain by themselves.

traditional thought, was also deemed a target for Mao. As for maintaining the revolutionary spirit, Mao's reputation and apparent charisma in the Chinese Communist Revolution laid the foundation for urging the masses to perpetuate the revolution by opposing the looming threat of the bourgeoisie and taking on a personal role, often in the form of popular vigilantism, in the elimination of CCP threats.

Crumbling Traditional Cultural Norms

Key to legitimizing Communism was delegitimizing prior regimes. The CCP sought to fundamentally change the values of Chinese society to favor Communist collectivism and discredit imperialism. Mao's attitude, or rather, contempt, for imperialism was palpable. He sought to reform the ideological groundwork of Chinese thought by subverting the historical narrative of China and undermining the legitimacy of Confucianism.

Under Mao's direction, academics in China sought to rewrite the course of Chinese historiography "away from the cyclical, dynastic model" to favor a narrative "generative of popular national sentiment" (V.Racknitz, 2014). Under the dynastic model, government legitimacy is derived from Tianming[7]. This theory describes rulers as imbued with legitimacy by the Heavens, with the ruler tasked with the duty of caring for the interests of the people. If the ruler did not fulfill his or her duty to the people, the overthrow of the ruler was justified for the Heavens would choose a more suitable person to fulfill the duty. While the idea of Tianming originated from the overthrow of the Shang dynasty by the Zhou dynasty and is not fundamentally incompatible with the proletariat struggle concept ascribed to Communism, the CCP viewed the dynastic model as a threat to its establishment. First, the dynastic narrative would model the CCP as the successor to an imperial legacy, a continuation rather than a

[7] Also known as "Heavenly Mandate" or "The Mandate of Heaven"

dramatic break. Second, Tianming had already become intertwined with Confucianism, which Mao believed ran counter to Marxism and posed an ideological threat. Tradition and respect for the past was infused in Chinese culture. Mao desired full commitment to the Communist ideal and would not allow nostalgia for a storied, glittering past.

To counter the ideological threat of imperial China, the CCP introduced changes to the educational system. Universities increased departments focused on Western world history, particularly the history of Russia and its transition to becoming the Soviet Union (V.Racknitz, 2014. Middle school curricula mirrored the increased emphasis on world history when the CCP made the subject a mandatory course of study (V.Racknitz, 2014. The purpose of early educational focus on Western history was to develop a sympathetic view amongst Chinese citizens towards ideological allies and to replace the imperial heritage with a Communist one.

The CCP's legitimization-by-proxy strategy was similarly observed in its establishment of Soviet-inspired informal education resources. Prior to the Cultural Revolution, the devotion of the CCP to establishing libraries reflected its strong Soviet ideological influence. In the first ten years after the founding of the People's Republic, the CCP imitated the library system of the Soviet Union by establishing public libraries, Academy of Science libraries, and academic libraries (Lee-Hsia, 1981, p.418). By the end of 1958, roughly 35,000 libraries run by labor unions and 182,960 village-run libraries had developed across China (Lee-Hsia, 1981, p.418). Availing peasants and workers with library services was an extension of the Leninist view "on libraries as a means of mass education and indoctrination" (Lee-Hsia, 1981, p.418). The product of the library system was dramatically increased academic resource equality as "libraries in Shanghai, which for many years had been the cultural and publishing center of China, transferred 500,000 volumes to help small libraries in six remote provinces, such as [Gansu] and [Xinjiang]"

(Lee-Hsia, 1981, p.419). The actions of the CCP in influencing academia and educating the public on Western history served to align Communist China to the Soviet legacy, rather than an imperial one.

Over time, the Party became increasingly focused on Mao-specific thought. Not simply invoking Marxist-Leninist ideas, "the ideological mainstay of the Cultural Revolution in China was the Thought of Mao [Zedong]" (Melnick, 1976). Maoist thought infiltrated every facet of education. "Mao Thought Study Classes" were created to educate the People's Liberation Army. 'May Seventh Cadre Schools' were established for Party officials." (Melnick, 1976). Most astonishingly, "even 'miracles' were attributed to the correct application of Mao [Zedong] Thought to every human activity and condition, such as curing cancer, healing deaf-mutes, and improving labor productivity and understanding" (Melnick, 1976).

Mao also emphatically targeted Confucianism, another cornerstone of imperialism. The demise of the Qing dynasty had relaxed the hold of Confucianism over Chinese society by Mao's time. Confucianism began to fall out of vogue after the revolution to overthrow the Qing dynasty for political commentators cited Confucian thought as a source of rot in imperial China, if not its downfall. In 1916, Yi Baishi questioned the character of Confucius, claiming that he was merely an ingratiating official of the state who massaged the egos of his superiors with his wavering writings on virtue and moral code (Miller, 2010). Mao advanced the demise of Confucianism for he dismissed social harmony and portrayed it as a tool used by imperial stated to suppress the common people (Miller, 2010). The CCP chipped away at Confucianism, choosing instead to instill in its constituents a revolutionary zeal.

Maintaining the Revolutionary Spirit

Mao used his powerful ability to drive people to action to give rise to popular vigilantism as he consistently cited the need for constant revolution. As a result of his persuasion, historic Confucian sites, like Confucius's burial ground, were vandalized by Chinese people emboldened by the dogma and encouragement of the CCP (Miller, 2010). As part of the revolutionary spirit, Mao required an ideological loftiness. In his 1959 speech at the 8th Plenary Session of the CCP, he stated that "it seems to be impossible to [evaluate project results like the commune] if economic accounting is applied" (Dittmer, 1974). Opposed to careful cost accounting and economic payoffs, Mao instead valued selflessness and masochistic willingness to accept setbacks. Mao expected political service to be "dramatically inspiring, usually of limited duration (as in martyrdom), and utterly altruistic – that is, it should not merely transcend but should contradict the actor's own interests" (Dittmer, 1974). Mao expressed the need for revolutionary spirit and ideological adherence to extremes. So committed was Mao to reducing the gap between elites and the masses that he was opposed to the gauze masks worn by doctors for "these screened [doctors] off from the people" (Dittmer, 1974).

Much of Mao's appeal came from his rousing speeches, which made observers in the Soviet Union believe that Mao's legitimization strategy was predominantly contingent on a cult of personality. Writing in 1964, Leonid Il'ichev, a top-ranking leader in Soviet Union, distanced Chinese Communism from Soviet Communism, saying that "the Communist Party of China does not exist and act on the basis of the priniciples of democratic centralism but in an atmosphere of the cult of the individual. The ideology of the cult of the individual contradicts the very spirit of Lenin's teaching" (Melnick, 1976). Another Soviet, writing for the Soviet Academy of the Sciences, names the five characteristics of Maoist legitimation: "(1) the admission of the CCP of

Mao's political program as the fundamental program of the Party; (2) the liquidation or neutralizing of Party opposition; (3) the personal authority of Mao as set against the Party; (4) executive support for the cult within the People's Liberation Army; "and (5) the transformation of the cult of [Mao Zedong] into an independent political-ideological weapon of the Peking hierarchy, as separated from the person of [Mao] himself" (Melnick, 1976). Both sources emphasize the impact of Mao's cult of personality and the influential role it played in gaining popular support for his policies.

Problems Created under Charismatic-Ideological Legitimization

The inherent legitimacy problem posed by charismatic-ideological legitimacy is that of longevity. Under a system contingent on the charisma of a single figure, once the figure departs the picture, the whole legitimization strategy collapses. The only way to maintain charismatic-ideological legitimacy past the first generation is to pass power along family lines and convert the legitimacy type to that of traditional legitimization.

The Great Leap Forward & Cultural Revolution

The Great Leap Forward was a hugely unsuccessful attempt to transform China into an industrial giant. Mao's effort to industrialize China began in 1957, after which steel plants were erected across the nation (Harms, 1996). At this time, "peasants already were forced to work in agricultural cooperatives" because "landowners had been stripped of their property" (Harms, 1996). Mao declared an ambitious timetable for catching up with Western steel production, planning to overtake British production within a year's time (Harms, 1996). Additionally, the government immersed the country in debt after government spending on heavy industry grew to comprise 56% of total state-sponsored capital investment (Harms, 1996). With the sole aim of the country focused on steel production, peasants deserted their stations in agricultural

cooperatives to pursue forge steel. During the winter of 1957-1958, "more than 100 million peasants were mobilized to build large-scale water conservation works" (Harms, 1996). Approximately 20 million people starved to death between 1959 and 1962, with some estimates as high as 43 million, because agricultural production was depressed by steel production aims (Jacob, 2013). Within three years of commencing the Great Leap Forward, the CCP had to quickly conclude it.

The Cultural Revolution was launched by Mao to combat the capitalist forces he viewed as threatening Chinese Communist. Two of the most significant policies enacted during this time were the "closure of schools and the Send-Down Movement" (Zhou, 2014, p.22). Due to Mao's preference for experiential versus formal education, he shut down schools nationwide. At the same time, he initiated a program that forced the immigration of huge numbers of people, particularly those who posed a political threat to him. Some claim that "Mao resorted to the more direct, political solution of transferring redundant urban labor, deviant cadres, idealistic or troublesome youth, and the like to the countryside en masse for permanent relocation" to protect his political position (Dittmer, 1974).

Research reveals that long-lasting effects of the Cultural Revolution include negative impacts on "educational attainment, work experience, marriage history, health condition and attitude towards determinants of personal success" (Zhou, 2014, p. 22). Other studies note the tremendous loss of human capital (Bai, 2015, p.20). In combination with the chronic malnutrition experienced as a result of the Great Leap Forward and its lasting impact on development, Mao's policies during this regime led to indebtedness, loss of human capital, and lower productivity for the remaining human capital.

After Mao

Mao Zedong's passion for the revolutionary spirit may have invigorated the hearts of Chinese citizens but led to country-wide starvation and forced China to take a step backwards, developmentally. However, his legacy also enabled his successors to reverse the damages he inflicted on the nation in a meteoric economic rise. Without Mao's establishment of firm media controls, his indoctrination of party loyalty, and his development of a cult of personality, the administrations following his would have encountered greater resistance than they did during the market reform period. Though higher education suffered during the Cultural Revolution, mass public education allowed China to catapult itself under the economic-performance-focused model.

The death of Mao Zedong spelled the end of charismatic-ideological legitimization for the CCP. The Gang of Four, a group led by Mao's wife, Jiang Qing, commandeered the CCP during the latter years of the Cultural Revolution but was swiftly deposed and smeared by the successor to Mao, Hua Guofeng. Hua Guofeng was selected by Mao but, as argued by Lowell Dittmer, charismatic leaders are "likely to select a member of his own administrative staff [and will] ensure that his choice will be limited to self-effacing, patient types" (Dittmer, 1974, p. 49). With Mao's "cult of personality" laid to rest, Hua was left with the dilemma of solving the litany of social and economic problems left in the wake of the Cultural Revolution while verbally invoking what ideological legitimacy the CCP retained from the memory of its founder. For the immediate period following Mao's death, Hua "[defended] the legitimacy of their new policies" by manipulating quotations because they still considered an appeal to Mao's authority as the "most effective weapon" (Tokuda, 1980, p.161). Hua's stopgap strategy parallels that of the early CCP when it initially aligned with Soviet Communism.

As poverty afflicted the nation, and those who suffered under the Cultural Revolution sought redress, to maintain an ideological legitimization strategy, the CCP needed to install a charismatic leader or seek alternatives. Bereft of its irreplaceable legitimacy personified, the CCP direly needed to pivot to a new non-ideological form of legitimization.

Chapter 2 Economic-Performance Legitimization

In reaction to the legitimacy vacuum left in Mao Zedong's wake, post-Mao leadership scrambled to save the country from the negative aftereffects of Mao's policies. While initially invoking the memory of Mao as a stopgap source of legitimacy, Deng Xiaoping – finally back from political banishment – began the systematic reversal of Maoist economic policy. Chapter 2 describes how the rapid liberalization of China's markets was enabled by the authoritarian foundation established under Mao's regime and required by the harrowing economic situation. While reforms of Deng Xiaoping led to the starry rise of China's economy, the dogged pursuit of economic gain, coupled with unchanged social policies, produced an array of inequalities. These inequalities eventually led to the rewriting of CCP legitimization strategy. While inklings of the new moral-ideological legitimization strategy emerged in the early 2000s, the CCP continued displaying significant economic-performance legitimization activities until around the global economic crisis of 2008.

Economic-Performance Legitimization as a Reaction to Mao

In the wake of Mao's death, Deng Xiaoping pushed for reforms to prevent the collapse of the weak Chinese economy. Deng described his own experience as "crossing a river by feeling the stones" given the massive confusion the ensued (The Second Long March, 2008). However, at the time of China's economic re-opening, the political climate of the CCP initially prevented a swift about-face in legitimization strategy. In the 1980s, the top echelon of the central government was comprised of revolutionary veterans who had participated in the uprising of the CCP and derived their party loyalty through long-term, personal involvement. While recognizing

the economic shortfalls of China, they attributed "poor performance to inexperience and Mao's personal mistakes", maintaining the ideology-based legitimation strategy of the CCP (Zhao, 2009). Instead, the economic-performance legitimacy strategy emerged naturally.

For citizens who had lost faith in state socialism and became aware of famines and Cultural Revolution atrocities, "moral and economic performance reemerged to become an important criterion of state legitimacy" (Zhao, 2009). The "new open-door policy allowed Chinese to have better access to information, which opened the eyes of the ordinary Chinese and shattered their trust in Mao and the CCP…it was amid this legitimacy crisis that the Chinese government gradually evolved from an ideology-based revolutionary regime into a performance-based authoritarian regime" (Zhao, 2009). Though to address poverty and achieve economic-performance legitimization, Deng had to pursue economic growth, he nonetheless maintained a firm grip on political expression.

Deng first pushed to increase the agricultural output of China, incentivizing their production by raising prices (The Second Long March, 2008). Deng achieved this by beginning the "household-responsibility system" in rural areas, granting farmers ownership of their crops while the land remained the property of the state (Le & Rabinovitch, 2008). Population control measures were established soon after the beginning of market reforms, begetting the one child policy. In 1980, Shenzhen become the test site of a "special economic zone", the success of which transformed Shenzhen into a global "manufacturing and shipping powerhouse" (Le & Rabinovitch, 2008).

Yet it was the enormous influx of opportunity and wealth to urban centers like Shenzhen, Shanghai, and Guangzhou that exacerbated wealthy disparity. The household registration system prevented people from moving away from their birthplaces, limiting many people to the

opportunities in their region (Kanbur & Zhang, 2005, p.12). China faced an urban-rural gap divided along regional lines, with the western regions of China experiencing the highest levels of urban-rural inequality (Sicular et al, 2008, p.123). The Gini coefficient of China, "which measures economic inequality in society, was estimated to be 0.33 in 1980 and rose to 0.45 to 0.47 [in 2005 and 2006]" (Fan & Sun, 2008, p.1).

Further growth occurred under the guidance of Jiang Zemin, who expanded China's economic growth by endorsing mass construction and production while remaining "firmly in control, without ever changing [the CCP's] intensely secretive [mode of governing]" (Faison, 1999). Large-scale infrastructure build-outs, like that of the Three Gorges Dam, proceeded with little environmental protectionism. The Chinese population expanded rapidly during Jiang's administration, putting a strain on resources (People's Daily, 2002). While overall wealth increased in China, the gains in wealth came with significant costs.

Problems Created by Economic-Performance Legitimization

Market Instability

The performance legitimation paradigm showed further signs of unraveling during the global financial crisis of 2008. While China was not initially hit as hard as the Western hemisphere, the financial crisis reduced global demand for China's export sector. Consequently, the CCP put into play an enormous stimulus package. Initially, the CCP was praised at G20 summits for its swift reaction to the global financial crisis (Gilley, 2010).

While the massive stimulus package buffered China from the tremendous demand decline during the global financial crisis, the Chinese economy sectors restructured in such a way that growth slowdown was inevitable, despite Keynesian expansionary programs. Not only did global demand decline during this time period, but the CCP's 12th and 13th Five-Year Plans both placed

great importance on large-scale deindustrialization to rebalance the economy with the understanding that export-led economic development was slim pickings (Wagner, 2016). The consequence of the initial $586 billion (USD) stimulus package was to set a precedent for minor stimuli packages, each with declining marginal utility from 2012 to 2014 (Wagner, 2016, p.14). The additional stimulus packages merely acted as short-term stopgaps for the Chinese economy, which no longer displayed growth drivers justifying the high expected GDP growth rates of pre-financial crisis peaks (Wagner, 2016). Corruption and favoritism have influences the flows of stimulus money, for state-owned enterprises have benefited by funneling funds into infrastructure and real estate projects (Wagner, 2016). Chinese academics at the Renmin University of China have called China's micro-stimulus policy a "near-sighted strategy" that has resulted in substantial "stimulus-dependence", calling for necessary "improvement in social security systems and social programs designed for maintaining long run growth" (Liu et al., 2015).

The economic rebalancing attempted by the CCP aggravated existing financial issues, particularly given that the stimuli packages have been financed by "an excessive level of debt" (Wagner, 2016). While the financial future of China is indeterminate, the credit expansion brought on by the stimuli packages increases the risk of credit busts. While the publicly announced figures for the Chinese financial stimulus was 4 trillion yuan, professors at Tsinghua University and Hong Kong University indicated to the *South China Morning Post* that fundraising was closer to 12 trillion yuan, 8-9 trillion yuan of which has been lent to local governments using land as collateral, incentivizing local governments to inflate land prices (Shih, 2012). By making immense loans to local governments with poor creditworthiness, the central government manipulated the rule of law for the National Development and Reform

Commission sidestepped existing restrictions on "lower levels of government [with no legal power] to borrow money or guarantee loans" (Shih, 2012). Interestingly,

Gorton and Ordonez argue that credit booms are typically harbingers of financial crisis risk, for easier access to capital incentivizes high collateral projects, which tend to bear low productivity characteristics (Gorton & Ordonez, 2016). They model a boom-bust cycle in which a credit boom, caused largely by a decay of credit information symmetry, is followed by a bust brought on by the inevitable release of hidden or obscured credit information (Gorton & Ordonez, 2016). Data supports that "a reallocation of resources from high productivity sectors (in manufacturing) to low productivity sectors (such as construction and real estate)" in China has occurred since the global financial crisis, which the CCP is hyperaware of (Wagner, 2016).

Social Unrest

While a significant wealth gap emerged as a result of economic growth, other costs of growth included: calls for democracy, poor environmental and food safety conditions, a widening wealth gap, and pervasive corruption. A more in-depth discussion of environmental and food safety issues along with the problem of corruption occur in Chapter 3.

Democracy

The most notable pro-democratic movement took place in 1989 in Tiananmen Square. The Tiananmen incident of 1989 was initially sparked by an increasing politicization of mourning for reformer Hu Yaobang. Student protestors presented a list of five topic-areas they wanted to discuss with Party leadership, named "the 1986 demonstrations and Hu Yaobang's role in these demonstrations, the financial dealings of the leaders and their relatives, political freedoms [and] funding for tertiary education" (Sandby-Thomas, 2014, p.55). Besides ignoring the petition, the *People's Daily* published a speech, purportedly authored by Deng Xiaoping,

which called the movement a "planned conspiracy", drawing upon the same word choice used to condemn the Gang of Four (Sandby-Thomas, 2014, p.56). Angering the student protestors further, the situation ended in violence. The swift military crackdown on the student movement silenced backlash, and even now, the Tiananmen incident is a well-known censored search term on the Chinese internet.

In the context of legitimization strategy, democracy plays a relatively minor role. The CCP has only one response to called for democracy: censorship and suppression. This approach holds true under any style of legitimization, for the CCP, highly sensitive to direct political threat, wields its media and propaganda organs closely for the express purpose of rapidly quieting dissent.

Environmental & Food Safety

While Chinese citizens were fairly convinced by the tremendous progress China has made economically that the Chinese government proven itself capable economically, its citizens are not so convinced that the government has the ability to maintain a high quality of life, particularly when it comes to food, air, and water quality. These subjects all fall under the umbrella of environmental concerns and fundamentally challenge the perception of the Chinese government as competent. For food alone, a number of scandals have dominated public discussion. Famously, Chinese infant formula manufacturers purposely used melamine, a chemical used in the production of industrial products, as a filler in their baby products. This shook consumer confidence in the Chinese milk market so significantly that as recently as 2015, the United States milk market was still benefiting from high milk demand from concerned Chinese parents[8]. Wealthy Chinese consumers have gone so far as to import canned air from

[8] Based on data the author accessed at an internship

abroad to avoid the ill effects of breathing in the air pollutants that cast a haze over a number of major Chinese cities (Butt, 2016).

The Decline of Economic-Performance Legitimacy

The government's dogged pursuit of performance legitimacy has run its course. Ample evidence indicates that the Chinese economy can no longer deliver astronomical GDP growth figures. Increasingly, media attention is focused instead on the stretch marks left by aggressive, government-led economic development. Glamorous office towers in major cities, in which real estate continues to be a hot commodity, are empty shells left to rot. Pollution is an immense headache, as a city-dwellers and countryside villagers experience deteriorating air, food, and water quality. Had the Chinese government maintained a steadfast adherence to performance legitimization, the central government's reputation would be in shambles. Rather than adhering to an outdated legitimization strategy, the CCP has modified its approach to establish moral-ideological legitimacy.

Chapter 3 Moral-Ideological Legitimization

The economic-performance legitimization strategy adopted in the post-Mao period, while necessary to address extreme poverty and backwards development, resulted in significant environmental and social issues. The Hu and Xi-led administrations began the shift towards a new official rhetoric that emphasized the social-consciousness of the government. Today, the Xi Jinping-led government is building its legitimization activities around moral-ideological legitimacy, a direct reaction to the problems it has inherited.

Moral-Ideological Legitimization as a Reaction to Performance Legitimacy

Dominating national and international discourse are worrying signs that the economy has not only slowed its stupendous growth, but may face a swift drop further downward. Supporting economic slowdown are consumer spending gauges like cinema ticket sales, which signal slower-than-expected domestic consumption (BBC, 2016). More visible signs of economic instability, particularly those driven by unsynchronized government initiatives, are obvious domestically. While Western stock markets are dominated by institutional investors, about 85% of Chinese stock market activity originates from retail investors, or ordinary Chinese citizens (Shen & Goh, 2015). Many of these lay investors piled into the stock market in what the *Wall Street Journal* calls "faith-based stock investing", depending on their faith in the central government's manipulation of the market more so than a studied analysis of company fundamentals or even technical trading indicators (Browne, 2015). Consequently, initial government intervention designed to prop up weak stock markets backfired for it attracted the hard-earned savings of vulnerable populations. Lacking patient institutional capital, retail

investors are hardwired to react aggressively to any market oscillation, like those caused by underpriced initial public offerings (IPOs), dramatically increasing the volatility of Chinese markets (Fahey & Chemi, 2015). Capital controls also ensure that foreign investors have limited access to the Chinese stock market, uncoupling the Chinese stock market from exchanges across the globe, for better or for worse (R.S., 2014). Thus, the CCP is locked in a pact with the devil, obligated to continue its policy of intervention until a dramatic bust or drop the act now to reform the system and face immediate backlash from the majority of Chinese citizens.

Further signs of inherited economic weakness are seen all over China's vast geography. At the peak of its economic success story, the policies of the CCP exacerbated socioeconomic divergences between the urban nouveau-riche and underserved farmers (Yao & Wang, 2013). Over 500 ghost cities, or cities built but wholly unoccupied, have been constructed since 1978 to sustain China's economic growth miracle (Tarantola, 2013). Local governments lined their own pockets by rubber-stamping approval for proposed projects despite uncertain long-term demand and the consequent need to displace impoverished populations (Tarantola, 2013). The harsh reality was that those who lacked housing – particularly those displaced in the build-out – did not have the means to afford the new developments. Speculators descended on skeletal new developments in droves, driving up the price of units, and further reduced the affordability of housing. Meanwhile, major cities are experiencing tremendous real estate price inflation as capital controls designed to benefit low-tier cities instead increase ownership stratification in top-tier cities (Bloomberg, 2016).

Even beneficiaries of economic growth face are marred; when they are not frantically diverting their assets overseas, they are faced with high levels of depression and suicide (Ren, 2016). National well-being surveys conducted by the CCP reveal an ironic – albeit unsurprising

– development paradox. While those who did not experience a change in socioeconomic status did not report a significant change in happiness, those who were upwardly mobile during China's economic boom reported a substantial declines in happiness metrics. These metrics include "[mental and physical health], education, marital status, formal household registration (*hukou*), and housing status" (Graham et al., 2015). In context, research indicates a stronger correlation between measures of life satisfaction and good governance than between measures of life satisfaction and real per capita incomes (Helliwell & Huang, 2006). Rising inequality and lower perceived life satisfaction throw into question the ability of the CCP to lead the nation.

Political legitimacy threats originate from sources beyond the economic and social changes directly brought on by rapid economic development. Ethnic minority groups, such as the Uighur minority, clamor for independence have been a motif for the past centuries, with resultant terrorist activity an increasing source of concern (Drennan, 2015). Visible environmental disintegration has struck fear in the hearts of Chinese citizens concerned for future generations. Residents of Shanghai were disgusted by the over 16,000 diseased pig carcasses found floating in the Huangpu River, the city's source of tap water (Davison, 2013). On Chinese social media, one user disparaged the government's "sluggish response [and] lack of disclosure" regarding the Huangpu River's reeking waters (Davison, 2013). The 2008 scandal over tainted infant formula panicked Chinese parents and led to public outcry over the government's role in regulating basic food and environmental safety. Nearly all food and environmental safety scandals have been linked back to government corruption and spotty regulatory enforcement. Rapid economic development has deprioritized human safety in both the public and private sectors of China. While the CCP commands high levels of political support as measured via nationwide public opinion surveys in 2002, 2007-2008, and 2012-2013, if food and environmental issues – which

are basic livability factors – persist without noticeable improvement, there is no doubt the CCP's legitimacy would be put to the test (Munro, et al, 2013).

Broadly, the CCP's riddle of the sphinx comes in the form of social instability. At the core source of social instability is rising socioeconomic inequality. Most post-Communist wealth originated from three sources. First, the private sector emerged as a competitive exporter on a global scale. Entrepreneurs who took advantage of the export industry and the associated opportunities flourished. Early entrants to markets created by market and social liberalization absorbed pent-up and newfound demand. Second, private sector inflows benefited the housing market, driving up demand and pricing in commercially-successful areas. Key business centers like Shanghai and Shenzhen witnessed skyrocketing property prices, with price per square foot rising to the level of cosmopolitan global peer cities. Most beneficiaries of housing market-related wealth, particularly prior to the advent of large-scale speculative buying, were caught by surprise in the early 2000s and became overnight millionaires. The distribution of wealth disproportionately benefited urban dwellers over rural residents and favored the commercially-gifted southern region over the northern region. The third source of wealth was an unfortunate consequence of unhindered capitalism. Corruption and graft snowballed as politicians at all levels of the government exchanged their political influence for bribes of all kinds. The Maoist doctrine of selfless Party service was all but forgotten as corruption was, by many counts, not only a frequent occurrence but often anticipated.

The first two sources of wealth generated economic inequality, allowing a sufficiently high number of people to benefit economically, so much so that the needs of the socioeconomically disadvantaged were mentioned only in stump speeches. Given the economic-performance legitimacy dogma that pervaded central government administration from the time of

market opening to the early 2000s, so long as GDP growth met or exceeded expectations and signs of economic development were visible to the masses, government legitimacy would not be threatened.

The relentless pursuit of economic gain, combined with a lack of sufficient intellectual property rights, made the "Made in China" label known worldwide as a symbol of quality deficiency and cheap labor. Ironically, goods made for export tended to be higher quality, leaving Chinese citizens with shoddy seconds. If the impact of mass production was merely limited to secondary consumer goods such as clothing and appliances, perhaps the domestic outcry would not be as threatening. However, food quality has been so affected by capitalism that even building blocks of meals, like eggs, were fabricated with inedible, inorganic materials. Newspaper exposes of popular foods became commonplace, with nationally recognizable brands like White Rabbit and Mengniu taking turns under the spotlight. Food and food culture resonates strongly within the Chinese population, so inadequate food quality decreased consumer confidence in the government's ability to regulate the most basic of resources. Visible at every economic tier, environmental and food safety related issues are the common denominator the central government cannot afford to ignore.

The third source of wealth gives the CCP head-splitting headaches. Evidence shows that even those who have not witnessed corruption firsthand believe there are high levels of corruption due to word-of-mouth effects, making it critical to ensure corruption is as imperceptible as possible. Evidence of corruption directly counters to claims of government competence, which the central government is somewhat insulated from. Chinese citizens tend to view government more positively the more removed they are from direct engagement, with data showing greater central government support compared to local government support. However,

once local corruption reaches a critical level of perception, citizen support for the central government declines. The central government's critical aim is to prevent local and national corruption from becoming visible enough to provoke backlash against the acceptance of the CCP. When corruption becomes too visible, the citizens assume that the central government has turned a blind eye to enforcement and may be engaged in corruption activities itself.

Moral-Ideological Legitimization Strategy

The CCP's interpretation of its sources of legitimacy threats are summarized in an academic paper from the College of Marxism at Guangxi Normal University. The authors contend that the party faces four issues: (1) social issues, (2) large-scale domestic and international crises undermining the party's ability to govern, (3) corroding rule of law and (4) Marxist ideology education problems (Zhang, 2016). The moral-ideological legitimization strategy adopted by the CCP is designed to combat the challenges it perceives. The strategy involves ideology-building components, an augmented responsiveness to social issues, and a far-reaching anti-corruption campaign. The ideology-building components directly address the ideological education problems and large-scale domestic and international crises issues. Augmented responsiveness is an operational reaction to social issues, namely environmental and food safety concerns. Finally, the anti-corruption campaign directly attacked the concern of corroding rule of law.

The reason morality and ideology form the basis of the current strategy of the CCP is because of its profound focus on social issues. Social issues contain an inherent moral element. By expressing its focus on social issues, particularly by using Confucian rhetoric, such as the word "harmony". The moral-ideological legitimacy strategy was first demoed by Jiang Zemin in a 2002 speech emphasizing the importance of harmony (Miller, 2010). The first formal

introduction of the "Harmonious Society" mantra to CCP rhetoric occurred during the Sixth Session of the 16th Central Committee of the CCP in 2006 (Miller, 2010). Further proof of social issue focus came in the form of a 2007 CCP report prepared by Wen Zibao, who "emphasized that ideological and moral education was necessary for the people" (Miller, 2010).

Ideology-Building Strategies

Magnification of Nationalism

The CCP has redoubled its efforts to develop a sense of nationalism throughout the country. It seeks to achieve this aim by referencing classical Chinese history in its rhetoric, replacing its Mao-era Soviet alignment with a claim to China's shining past as well as portraying foreign nations, particularly Japan, in anti-Chinese light. The realignment with classical Chinese history allows the CCP to latch onto the "century of humiliation" narrative in which China is portrayed as the victim of a series of foreign invasion which have prevented China from reaching its full potential. This narrative is based upon a claim to cultural superiority, and has the secondary benefits of establishing some form of traditional legitimization with the Chinese people, if the strategy is successful. Demonizing foreign nations has the effect of instilling fear in the Chinese people, necessitating the support of a strong central government, and thus increasing popular support. Dickson et al.'s research confirms that nationalism, and secondarily, fear of instability, are "important sources of legitimacy (Dickson et al, 2016, p.25).

In a study of the research priorities of universities in China, Ines Even v.Racknitz identified a "change in paradigms of political legitimation of power in China" in the mid-1980s (V. Racknitz, 2014). While "legitimation between 1949 and the mid-1980s rested very much on the notion that the old order [was] thrown over by a revolutionary state, [the post-Deng CCP emphasized] the continuity to a splendid imperial past, [rather] than the revolutionary traditions"

(V. Racknitz, 2014). The paradigm shift was reflected in an increased in academic research – and dedicated departments – devoted to the study of world history and "New" Qing history (V. Racknitz, 2014).

Territorial disputes are an extension of the CCP's long-term strategy to shift towards identification as the successor of earlier dynasties. The formal opposition of the CCP towards Japan sovereignty over the Diaoyu Islands was a largely ceremonial stance designed to align the CCP with an imperial legacy, with historical claims to the islands rooted in the Ming Dynasty as well as pro-nationalism efforts by both the Republic of China and the People's republic of China in the 1970s (Sandby-Thomas, 2015, p.103). In addition to a statement released on the front page of the *People's Daily* in September 2012 by the foreign ministry, the CCP further escalated its contest of the Diaoyu Islands by dispatching patrol ships, organizing protests in over 50 cities, and lodging complaints with the United Nations (Sandby-Thomas, 2015, p.104).

State sponsorships of protests was evidenced by reports of police officers directing protestors on how to behave as well as emphasizing central government support of the people's right to air their grievances (Beach, 2012). The *People's Daily* outright supported the protests, with an editorial calling the protests an extension of patriotic fervor from a bullied people, furthering the "century of humiliation" rhetoric propagated by the CCP (Beach, 2012).

Using the Japan-as-aggressor narrative, the CCP was cast as the protective savior of the Chinese people from Japanese invaders (Friedman, 2008). The use of nationalist sentiment is not new to CCP strategy. Following the 1989 Tiananmen protests, the CCP buckled down on its anti-Japanese propaganda campaign so much that one of the "best known films of the era" was the 1987 "Red Sorghum", in which the Japanese order the skinning of a live Communist guerilla fighter (Lague & Lee, 2013). A study of *People's Daily* articles in 1985, 1995, and 2005

demonstrated usage of anti-Japanese phrases has increased dramatically in official media over time (Brooks, 2013, p.224). The anti-Japan "century of humiliation" narrative is a motif the CCP has used successfully for many years, and in the buildout of ideological legitimizations, this tool is particularly useful. It is worth nothing that appeals to nationalism can be a double-edged sword; when China experienced the growth of popular nationalism in the 1990s, aggressive nationalist criticized the CCP's perceived weakness in foreign policy affairs (Sandby-Thomas, 2014, p.50).

Enhanced Media Controls

In spite of increased responsiveness to social issues (discussed in a later section), the CCP made media interactions with the public more transparent only for issues directly dealing with social issues that do not contest the structure of government. When it comes to pro-democracy efforts, the CCP has maintained a cautious policy of censorship and suppression. In 2008, over 8,100 Chinese people had already signed a manifesto called "Charter 08", a major pro-democracy protest led by Liu Xiaobo, a literary critic (Washington Post, 2009). The Chinese propaganda machine immediately responded and blocked internet access to the protest movement, which had spread quickly via social media (Washington Post, 2009).

Stockmann and Gallagher conducted a survey of four Chinese cities in 2005 learned about the grooming of public opinion via state-controlled media on the issue of labor disputes beginning in the 1980s-1990s and found that while citizens are aware of the state's influence on mass media, even highly informed citizens are not strongly resistant to media messages (Stockmann & Gallagher, 2011, p.23). Their findings indicate that media coverage of labor disputes tend to sympathize with the underdog and "omits problems associated with implementation of the law and provides legitimating examples to other potential plaintiffs",

meaning that “increased litigious behavior and a new emphasis on ‘rights’ protections” is not quite a legitimation crisis, but rather an extension of a broad party stance and attitude (Stockmann & Gallagher, 2011, p.23). Most intriguingly, the ability of the CCP to influence public opinions is bolstered by modern news formats such as news, ‘publicity’, and documentary rather than as the old style propaganda of a Leninist state”, which could indicate less political liberalization than often assumed (Stockmann & Gallagher, 2011, p.23).

Responsiveness to Issues of Social Concern

The CCP’s heightened responsiveness to issues of social concern takes on positive and negatives forms. First, the government show proven itself to be more sympathetic and benevolent towards social complaints that do not directly challenge government structure. In the Nu Jiang example discussed in the Three Gorges case study, the CCP tacitly withdrew the plans for a cascade of 13 dams along the Nu River. Following protests against a paraxylene plant in Xiamen with a turnout exceeding 10,000 protestors, the project was moved to Zhangzhou, where the local government emphasized transparency in the form of reports, publicity, and cadre access (The Economist, 2014). The government, having identified paraxylene as a hot social issue, reacted much more quickly when the second protest of similar origin erupted. In March 2014, demonstrations against a joint venture by the local government of the Guangdong province and Sinopec for the construction of a paraxylene (PX) plant broke out, with more than 1,000 protestors demonstrating outside of government buildings (The Economist, 2014). Soon thereafter, the government delayed the protested Maoming/Guangdong project, a subtle retraction of a state-sponsored project.

Another example of the CCP’s social consciousness policy is found in its piloting of collaborative policy-making. In 2011, the CCP consulted the public regarding tax-free allowance

proposal; ultimately, the majority of poll respondents preferred an allowance in excess of 3000 RMB, which was greater than the original government proposal, which the government accepted (Cao, 2014, p.13). The involvement of citizens in formerly closed-door policy proposals signals that the government desires to appear responsive to Chinese citizens.

Second, the CCP is reacting more quickly to perceived threats stemming from issues associated with intense social concern. In response to the melamine incident of 2008 involving Sanlu, the CCP's "official discourse constructed problems narrowly, downplaying the Sanlu scandal as simply a food safety incident" while largely downplaying "participatory [roles] for non-state actors, such as citizens and lawyers, to help shape legal norms" (Lei & Zhou, 2015).

The government's heightened responsiveness to social issues, particularly protest-related topics like food and environmental safety has also led to broad policy shifts. Beginning 2012, the US Embassy in Beijing began publishing air pollution data – accessible to the Chinese public. The data indicated that air pollution in major cities was substantially higher than previously indicated by the Chinese government. The release of air pollution data was closely followed by an uptick in "mass incidents" protesting the poor environmental conditions and standards. Environment-related mass incidents increased by 31% from 2012 to 2013, prompting the release of a rapid series of environmental policies (Albert, 2016). Premier Li Keqiang declared "war" on pollution in May 2014, citing industrial pollution as a significant cause of smog and promising to reduce steel production, a highly polluting heavy industry (Martina et al., 2014). For the first time in a quarter century, the CCP amended China's environmental protection law to increase the power of the environmental ministry in April 2014 (Kaiman, 2014). Given the environmental backlash related to the Three Gorges dam, Xi Jinping pledged to stop construction of new projects on the Yangtze River, which he called "an important ecological treasure", in a January

2016 forum in Chongqing (Fang, 2016). The government's commitment to embracing environmental protectionism is not only a highly effective mode of expressing moral-ideological legitimacy but is also a sign that the CCP recognizes environmental issues as a critical, legitimacy-impacting social issue.

The CCP has also included into its social consciousness campaign and unprecedented willingness to criticize past administrations. In a notable example, involving the *Southern Weekly*, the May 21, 2012 edition of the magazine covered the famine that followed Mao's Great Leap forward. The article described the history of China as "sometimes divided into two parts: history itself, and 'admitted history'. The famine, which is unparalleled in human history, has neither an official record nor a reasonable explanation" (Mackinnon, 2012). Despite the article's criticism of the past government administrations, censorship officials did not interfere with its publication. Another example of selective government censorship involved a May 2012 post on Weibo, which referenced the suicides of public figures that followed in the wake of Mao's Cultural Revolution (Qin, 2012). Within a day, the uncensored post had been shared 4,696 times, with 1,131 comments, many of which were "confessional-style", involving personal stories about family members who had suffered or even died (Qin, 2012). The government's willingness to distance itself from past administrations, allows criticism of past governments aggrandize its own comparative morality. By emphasizing its willingness to side with the citizens by paying special attention to social issues, the CCP furthers its moral-ideological legitimization strategy to combat perceived legitimacy threats.

Anti-Corruption Campaign

The most famous corruption case in recent CCP history was that of Bo Xilai in 2013. Once a charismatic, self-promoting leftist rising political star, Bo was found guilty of taking bribes from a murdered British businessman, Neil Heywood. Bo's wife, the murderer of Heywood, revealed the extravagant lifestyle Bo's corruption had granted their now-infamous son, Bo Guagua (Huang, 2013). Bo's reputation was left in tatters following the tremendous media frenzy that purused the entire Bo family throughout the case. The trial was so closely followed that Bo's wife was scrutinized in photos, leading to social media gossip suggesting that she had hired a body double (Wu, 2012).

Since Bo Xilai was a top succession choice for the CCP with an excellent record from his time managing Chongqing, the fall of Bo Xilai dealt a heavy blow to the CCP's corruption reputations. In response to the fury aroused by Bo Xilai, as well as the accusations of corruption associated with many major projects (see Three Gorge case study), the CCP has adopted a strong-line attitude towards corruption, with Xi Jinping spearheading a concerted effort to topple even well-known, powerful political figures.

Another dramatic figure caught in Xi's sweeping anti-corruption campaign was Xu Caihou sounds like a character out of the *Arabian Nights.* The former vice-chairman of China's Central Military Commission who was caught with "so much cash and gems that [investigators] needed a week to count it and 12 trucks to haul it away" (Clover & Anderlini, 2014). Not only was his cash stored in boxes, the boxes were labeled with the names of military officers who had paid him for their positions.

The benefits of a widespread anti-corruption campaign are two-fold. First, the central government can create the perception that it is duly enforcing rule of law. Second, the central

government has the option of framing local governments as the chief source of rot. Due to an inherent local legitimacy deficit, in which the local government experiences less public opinion support than the central government, "if the central leadership has an intentional strategy of shifting the blame for public policy frustrations onto local governments while preserving popular support for the system as a whole, it seems to be working" (Dickson et al, 2016, p.25). A secondary benefit of anti-corruption campaigns is eliminating political dissidence within the party. Some commentators maintain that Xi Jinping has pursued a policy of not only reassuring the public that the government is properly enforcing rule of law but also has used his campaign as a tool to dethrone political opposition.

Case Study: The Three Gorges Dam

Relevance to Political Legitimization Strategy

The Three Gorges Dam is an informative case study when illustrating the shift from performance legitimization to ideological legitimization. The project, at heart an economic endeavor, was widely publicized in the media required central government intervention, unlike other smaller-scale infrastructure projects. During the period of CCP history characterized by economic-performance legitimacy, infrastructure of a significant recipient of domestic and foreign investment. Major infrastructure projects were lauded as major public developments that created employment opportunities and fueled business opportunities. While the public evaluated the Three Gorges Dam project on the basis of economic performance during the build-out, public perception after the buildout was determined by social functionality and environmental impact. As a result of projects like the Three Gorges Dam, which raised public awareness of the social impact of economic growth, environmental degradation, and institutional corruption, the CCP

altered the course of its legitimization strategy to adapt to the changing burdens imposed by the Chinese public.

Background of the Three Gorges Dam

The Three Gorges Dam was the brainchild of Sun Yat-sen, who wrote in 1919 that the Changjiang River should be wrestled under control by a single massive dam or a series of smaller dams (Ponseti & Lopez-Pujol, 2006). This idea was laid by the wayside as other issues took priority and was not explored until substantial flooding of the Changjing in 1949 drove flood control to the top of the national agenda. After an onslaught of flooding activity in 1954 caused the death of 30,000, the central government began to seriously consider the development of the Three Gorges dam as a flood control solution.

The Three Gorges Dam project was funded partly through a special levy built into electricity prices between 1992 and 2009 (Hui & Blanchard, 2014). This makes the Three Gorges project a particularly sensitive subject for the Chinese populace because they feel personally invested.

The Three Gorges Dam is a remarkable example of development politics. Midway through the construction of the dam, the Asian financial bubble burst and the dam project experienced a funding shortfall of $3 billion USD (Lee, 2013). Up until this point, Chinese authorities had largely framed the Three Gorges Dam as critical to Chinese modernization. However, when project leads sought out the global capital markets, transnational environmental campaigners dogged their footsteps by addressing their appeals to global investment banks and stock exchanges. Until the Chinese government shifted its marketing of the Three Gorges Dam from a development project to a hydropower and sustainability project, the Three Gorges Corporation was unable to issue bonds or stock on the international markets (Lee, 2013).

Officially completed in May 2012[9], the Three Gorges Dam was hailed as "the grandest project the Chinese people have undertaken in thousands of years" by the general manager of the Three Gorges Project Development Corporation (China Daily, 2006). The hydropower dam is capable of generating 22,500 megawatts of electricity, comprising nearly one-ninth of China's total generated power. An engineering marvel standing at 181 meter high and spanning a distance of 2.34 kilometers, the Three Gorges Dam is the largest hydropower dam in the world by electricity production capacity. The dammed section of the Three Gorges region is now a reservoir over 650 kilometers long (The Guardian, 2011).

Like many Chinese water works, the Three Gorges Dam is named after the area it now occupies. The dam is nestled in the midst of the Wu Gorge, the Qutong Gorge, and the Xiling Gorge (Handwerk, 2006). This area was renowned for its aesthetic beauty and was frequently the subject of poems written by Li Bai, China's most famous poet. The dam is managed by the Three Gorges Corporation, a state-controlled company established specifically for managing the dam. Not only did the Three Gorges Corporation oversee the construction of the dam, but it also manages, via a subsidiary, its substantial power operations in the present day.

Central Government Framing of the Project under Performance Legitimacy

The main benefits of the Three Gorges Dam as stated by official government mouthpieces at the time of construction were "flood control, power generation and navigation" (Embassy). The $25 billion USD dam was slated to generate 84.7 billion kilowatt-hours per year as well as provide access to interior regions to 10,000-ton ships (Lee, 2013). As with many dams built prior to China's economic renaissance, the Three Gorges Dam was part of an overall government campaign to modernize China and fuel an economic boom. The project was intended

[9] While the Three Gorges Dam was slated for completion in 2009, dam construction did not reach full functionality until 2012. The dam body, the most visible and physically large portion of the project, was finished in 2006.

to “pull resources, such as capital and production know-how, from the coastal area to form regional hubs of economic exchange inland” (Lee, 2013).

Environmental Problems

Environmental degradation resulting from the Three Gorges Dam has two general effects: increased threats to human life and pollution of natural resources. The enormous weight of the Three Gorges Dam reservoir has been linked to life-threatening landslide activity. Local officials of Miaohe, a mere 17 kilometers away from the dam site, are fearful that an entire mountainside is at risk of taking the lives of numerous villagers (Oster, 2007). Some government acknowledgement of safety risks has taken place for the government has begun providing landslide warning systems. Dam stability itself also poses an environmental threat; as a notable precedent, a 1975 dam collapse previously covered up by the Chinese government killed over 10,000 civilians (Oster, 2007). Substantial evidence of pollution is present at the dam site. The vice director of the Department of Reservoir Management at the Three Gorges Project Construction Committee admitted that sewage levels within the reservoir were rising (Oster, 2007). According to the Ministry of Environmental Protection, the Changjiang is heavily contaminated by copper, zinc, lead and ammonium (The Guardian, 2011). Reports by Chinese media and official government sources of polluted waterways and dam-related safety risks has fomented fear in citizens, manifested in public protests.

Public concern over environmental degradation is alarming for the Chinese government. More than any other issue produced by the construction of the Three Gorges Dam, environmental degradation is most directly tied to political instability. A retired insider of the Committee of Political and Legislative Affairs identified “environmental concern” as the key catalyst behind 30,000 to 50,000 of the mass protests that occur in China every year (French,

2014). The negative impact of environmental protests on political stability has been well-documented even at very high levels of Chinese government. This is significant given that the upper echelon of Chinese government is notoriously tight-lipped regarding threats to political authority. Zhou Shengxian, China's first Minister of Environmental Protection, openly admitted that pollution has become kindling for "social instability" (French, 2014). Protests over "polluted water, damaged crops, air pollution, and forced resettlement" are the greatest harbingers of social unrest for Chinese leaders (Economy, 2004).

The government's willingness to admit to unrest triggered by concerns of environmental degradation is not surprising given the incontrovertible numbers. The prevalence of mass environmental protest has grown from 90,000 in 2006 to 180,000 in 2010 (Ogden, 2013). A doubling in mass protests in the span of four years is nothing to sneeze at, much less from the perspective of a controlled centralized government. This trend is confirmed by government figures, as Yang Zhaofei, Vice-Chair of the Chinese Society for Environmental Sciences, stated before the Standing Committee of the 11th National People's Congress that there has been a 29% annual increase in the number of environmental protests in China since 1996 (Jie & Tao, 2012). Environmental protests are particularly effective because, as Shan Guangnai of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences notes, environmental issues are relatively apolitical (Jie & Tao, 2012). Protestors are less likely to believe that they will be arrested by authorities because environmental protests do not overtly challenge the government. In some cases, those wanting to protest other risky issues surrounding major projects use the kosher banner of environmental protest to lobby for private interests.

In 2005, an environmental protest in Dongyang caught government authorities by surprise. Following rampant pollution by chemical plants in Dongyang, Zhejiang Province, and

reluctance of officials at all levels of government to respond, nearly 40,000 desperate villagers took to the streets and wreaked havoc in violent protest. The scale of the mass protest brought national attention to the incident, prompting full attention from the central government. The "main drivers of unrest [behind the Dongyang case were that] 'entrepreneurial' local governments [permitted] pollution and the lack of effective grievance relief channels" (Ma, 2009). Why the massive protest took place in a rural area is understandable given that rural citizens are particularly sensitive to environmental pollution due to stunted health infrastructure and traditional agricultural interests. Perhaps a particularly worrying dimension of the Dongyang protests was that villagers outnumbered police by more than 3:1, forcing many police officers to flee. While the Dongyang mass incident was the first of its kind to be scrutinized under the limelight, many similarly large environmental protests have taken place in rural areas of China since 2005.

Another environmental problem brought on by the construction of the Three Gorges Dam was poor silt control and increased flood risk. Flood control of the Changjiang River is in large part dependent on the intelligent management of silt. However, the Three Gorges reservoir is experiencing faster than expected sedimentation from the estimated 500 million metric tons of silt brought into the gorge area annually (Oster, 2007). Because sediment is trapped by the dam, the filtered Changjiang water gushes out at a much faster flow rate. Ironically, the force of filtered water threatens the integrity of downstream dikes as well as that of the layered limestone base of the dam itself. Further down the river, the opposite is true further downstream for drought conditions have emerged as a result of the dam's construction, impacting communities in the Hunan and Hubei provinces (The Guardian, 2011). In fact, the Geological Society of London identifies slope instability as the Three Gorges Dam's "most widespread natural hazard" (Oster,

2007). Due to design incompetence or poor foresight, the Three Gorges Dam does not successfully implement a flood control system.

Upon completion in 2006[10], the Three Gorges Dam was lauded as "great engineering achievement" by the central government (Fang, 2016). However, "critics [have said] that the massive hydraulic project has caused many problems for the Yangtze River and its surrounding areas for over a decade – over 1.5 million residents living near the Yangtze River were forcibly resettled; deteriorating water quality endangered plant and animal life; and construction waste has caused sever environmental pollution (Fang, 2016). The increased silt concentration upstream of the Three Gorges Dam as inhibited the project from delivering navigation benefits. Shipping activity has halted along the middle stretches of the Changjiang (The Guardian, 2011). While the dam has not delivered on flood control and navigational promises, the dam had lived up to energy generation promises, at a cost. National security risks posed by the Three Gorges Dam were made apparent when the Chinese people uncovered a US Congressional report discussing the dam as a weak point and potential bombing target, prompting fury from General Liu Yuan in 2004 and furthered concerns of the Chinese people (Page, 2011).

Social Problems

Resettlement is a challenge for political stability because of the raw human drama that arises from the forcible uprooting of people from their homes. When over a million people are relocated, even the most vigorous attempts by the government to quell public discourse will inevitably fail. Shan Guangnai of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences called "illegal land seizures and relocations, labor disputes and environmental pollution [the] three factors driving popular protests" (Jie & Tao, 2012).

[10] Only the body of the dam (not including turbines) was completed in 2006.

The Chinese government has not handled resettlement of residents of the Three Gorges Dam area well. Resettlement compensation, an expense recognized and adjusted for in the dam construction project, has not been effectively distributed to the appropriate recipients due to rampant abuse of funds by local governments.

While government mouthpieces lauded efforts to help already economically disadvantaged groups find higher paying jobs in other regions, evidence suggests otherwise. Often, resettled villagers – frequently farmers – are shifted to plots of less fertile land. Poor villagers are forced to migrate longer distances into urban areas, where they are denied the job opportunities and social services they were promised. Some villagers were appalled to learn that the free education for their children they were promised as a condition of their resettlement was merely a pretense (Oster, 2007). Stranger are some of the promised compensation packages offered for resettlement. While government communication of resettlement timelines and details was poor, the efforts by the government to win popular support prior to dam proceedings were not as subtle as intended. Villagers noted that government-subsidized dowries, designed to make village daughters more competitive marriage counterparts in urban areas, were introduced before resettlement was even discussed (Oster, 2007).

Corruption Issues

One of the most unsettling consequences of the Three Gorges Dam project is not one grounded in engineering or policy but instead that deeply ingrained governmental corruption was unabashedly exposed to the public. Corruption has plagued the dam project from start to finish. As already discussed, resettlement funds designed to assist those forced to move their livelihoods to other areas have not been equitably distributed to resettled populations. This phenomenon most frequently occurred at lower levels of government. Nonetheless, a number of high-level

officials were unable to escape graft probes. China's anti-graft watchdog released a report on the Three Gorges Corporation in February 2014 on its official website detailing corrupt conduct. Chinese netizens discussed allegations online, with one Sina Weibo user asking (translated), "Did the Three Gorges fund paid by us all on every electricity bill actually go to feed dogs?" (Hui & Blanchard, 2014).

Summary of Performance Legitimization Approach to the Three Gorges Dam

Liu Shukun, a professor at the China Institute of Water Resources and Hydropower Research, compared the Yangtze River to Xuanzang, the monk at the heart of *Journey to the West* (西游记), who is constantly "pursued by demons trying to eat his flesh", because so many industries profit from the Yangtze's resources (Fang, 2016). Under the performance legitimating strategy, the CCP valued the economic gains of the construction of the dam and the positive media spin such a massive "green" hydropower endeavor would generate. In allowing local governments to take unsupervised charge of the project, every stage of the project became flawed. At the design stage, the dam was designed to impress by size, rather than by functionality. Frequently comparisons are drawn between the Three Gorges Dam, which destroyed local ecology, and the centuries-old Dujiangyan water system, which has left nature relatively untouched and is inexpensive to maintain. In terms of costs, funds provided for the construction of the dam were embezzled by corrupt officials, unencumbered by rule of law enforcement. During project implementation, the resettlement of already disadvantaged populations exacerbated the housing and economic problems embattling the region, creating a new source of legitimacy threat. Economic performance legitimization strategy employed in the case of the Three Gorges Dam led to enormous social costs the central government has yet to fully pay.

Moral-Ideological Legitimization Reaction to Three Gorges Dam

Following the massive, and very public, failure of the Three Gorges Dam, both the central government and the Chinese masses have become increasingly concerned about environmental development. For the CCP, the environment is a public arena by which the central government's legitimacy is evaluated, for large infrastructure projects spearheaded by centralized leadership. Without local governments to blame, the onus is on the CCP to perform well in the environmental arena and create the impression that environmental matters are a top concern, especially for moral reasons. For the Chinese people, environmental project failure is just another signal that the CCP is not sufficiently committed to ensuring the environmental and food safety of the public.

In particular, the mass incidents that have followed the construction of the Three Gorges dam has influenced the activities of the CCP. The former chief nuclear safety engineer of the Ministry of Environmental Protection, Yang Zhaofei, noted that soundly designed state-sponsored projects with ample environmental protection provisions have been called off after "preventative" public protests (Fang, 2016). An insider using a pseudonym reported that the 18th National Party Congress considered a report on social stability as related to protests; shortly thereafter, the Ministry of Environmental Protection opened public access to environmental impact reports and the National Development and Reform Commission announced that feasibility studies for major projects would need to include a social stability assessment component (Fang, 2016).

It is worth noting that the current government is particularly sensitive to threats to political stability poised by environmental protests. The Dongyang mass incident of 2005 as well as three other significant environmental protests occurred in the Zhejiang Province while Xi

Jinping was governor. During this time, he described environmental protests as capable of "[destroying] the fruits of reform and opening]" in a speech (Ma, 2009). Given Xi Jinping's sour experience with environmental protests and his belief that protests threaten social stability, it is not hard to imagine his stance today.

Given Xi Jinping's prior experiences with environmental protests as well as the public failure of the Three Gorges Dam, the government has become much more proactive in responding to environmental complaints. After protestors opposed the construction of a slew of dams along the Nu Jiang[11], the CCP silently began to retract its original plans. Without publicly referencing the Nu Jiang protests or announcing the closure of the 13 Nu Jiang dams, the CCP stopped construction in the project areas, which was only discovered after reporters visited build sites to find zero activity (Leavenworth, 2016). Though officials refused to discuss Nu Jiang plans, and the projects are still listed as a hydropower based in the national five-year plan, subtle signs – particularly talk of vegetation restoration and a possible national park – signal that the government has heard public protest full well (Jing, 2016).

The central government's augmented responsiveness to criticism – though falling short of acknowledgment – further affirms the presence of a socially-minded moral legitimization strategy. As public concern enveloping environmental and food safety augments, the CCP is likely to continue its policy responsiveness. To align the current CCP with the interest of the Chinese people, the central government has silently taken steps to distance the current administration from prior administrations. At an anniversary ceremony of the Three Gorges Dam project, not a single central government official was present. As a testament to the government's commitment to greater responsiveness regarding social issues, the State Council in 2011 released a statement directly referring to the "urgent problems [that] must be resolved regarding the

[11] The last undeveloped river in China.

smooth relocation of residents, ecological protection and geological disaster prevention" (Wines, 2011). Another official criticized the dam construction process, accusing the planners of improperly accounting for the dam's impact on surrounding water bodies (Wong, 2011). Though the CCP demonstrated a social consciousness regarding issues of environmental importance, the CCP's well-received "transparency" may well be a cleverly disguised effort to distance itself from past administrations, allowing further shifting of blame.

Conclusion

Established on the battleground, it is no wonder the CCP, given its revolutionary roots, adopts a highly reactionary approach to legitimization. The policy dogmas that appeared post-Mao are distinctively issue oriented. Policies are made in response to the perceived priorities of the era. For example, Jiang Zemin's "Three Represents" responds to the incorporation of the previously "bourgeoisie sympathizer" entrepreneurs in the 1990s while Hu Jintao's "Scientific Development" was a response to "bridging the rich/poor gap in the 2000s" (Cao, 2014, p.10).

With an established pattern of reactionary legitimization, it would come as no surprise with the cycle repeated itself again when the moral-legitimization strategy of the CCP churns out a new set of legitimacy challenges. Perhaps, the threat facing the CCP will be that of the call for democracy given its increased emphasis on governmental responsiveness. Perhaps, the appeal to nationalism may backfire, causing populist nationalists to call for war.

If Xi Jinping's moral-ideological legitimation strategy proves successful, the CCP may be able to defuse the ticking time bombs facing China's economic and social status today. Under the guiding hand of Xi Jinping, the CCP is once again leaning towards ideological legitimation, with new, updated characteristics. Perhaps the most striking symbol of this legitimation cycle is the Chinese yuan. While currency is so often the symbol of capitalist wealth, Mao Zedong's face smiles serenely on the front of the yuan, a constant reminder of China's ideological legacy.

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